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The Director

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Washington, D.C. 20505

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FILE CONFIDENTIAL

4 AUG 1978

Honorable Barry Goldwater
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Barry:

I appreciate the concern expressed in your 19 July letter regarding the leak to Seymour Hersh of the New York Times involving the Committee's report [redacted] I believe leaks of this sort are very destructive to the oversight process. Leaks of sensitive information have indeed been a problem for all recent Administrations and Congresses, but it is my hope that President Carter's strong stand and personal involvement in trying to stop leaks will have a significant impact.

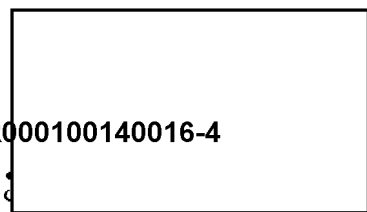
Our analysis of the Hersh story apparently differs a bit from the Committee's. There are certainly significant inaccuracies in the story, strongly suggesting that Hersh did not see the report itself, but rather was told of its contents. Yet the fundamental allegation in the report that Congress was repeatedly misinformed about the [redacted] action program is accurately characterized. It would be interesting to know whether the discussion of hiring mercenaries, which appears in the Times story, but not in the final version of the report, was the subject of Committee discussions or appeared in drafts of the report. Since this topic was not in the report disseminated to CIA and the President, the leak of this information could not have come from the Executive Branch.

As with most of these leaks, it is difficult to identify the responsible party or parties. One would surmise that those responsible would take steps to hide their identity, such as by leaking the information only after it had been disseminated to others. It should be noted that the key period when the report was disseminated to the Executive Branch was also the period when the report was given final approval by the full Committee, and was presumably available to all 19 Members and 40 or 50 staff members. Regarding Executive Branch handling of the report, it has received very limited dissemination. The copy sent to me was seen by only about 10 people at the Agency--those employees in the Office of Legislative Counsel and Operations Directorate responsible for analyzing the report. Most of these employees did not see it until after Mr. Hersh had the story. The copy sent to the President was held by a senior staff member of the National Security Council pending resolution of the differences between the Committee and the Agency regarding the report.

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This copy was not Xeroxed or otherwise disseminated to Ambassador Young or any others in the Administration.

At the same time, I in no way wish to imply that I am not concerned that this leak may have come from the Executive Branch. I will pursue every effort to establish if that were the case. My personal attitude in cases of this sort is that all parties to the information must do a self-evaluation and investigation. Only then can we stem the flow of leaks that is doing the country so much harm.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNED

STANSFIELD TURNER

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